

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L TEL AVIV 3506

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PINT, IS

SUBJECT: POLICY DEBATE ON ISRAELI ARABS

1. PRIME MINISTER'S ARAB AFFAIRS ADVISOR (TOLEDANO) AND WELL-INFORMED HAARETZ JOURNALIST HAVE TOLD US THE LABOR PARTY AND ISRAELI CABINET ARE ABOUT TO ENGAGE IN IN-DEPTH DISCUSSION OF POLICY TOWARD ISRAELI ARABS AND CONSIDERATION OF SPECIFIC PROPOSALS FOR IMPROVING RELATIONS BETWEEN THE JEWISH AND ARAB COMMUNITIES IN ISRAEL. BOTH SOURCES HAVE EMPHASIZED THAT THE DECISION TO CONDUCT THIS POLICY REVIEW AND TO CONSIDER NEW APPROACHES AT THIS TIME REFLECTS A NEW AWARENESS BY THE POLITICAL ELITE OF THE GRAVITY OF THE PROBLEMS, A SINCERE DESIRE TO TRY TO DO SOMETHING ABOUT THEM, AND A CONCERN FOR A FURTHER DETERIORATION OF JEWISH/ARAB RELATIONS IF SIGNIFICANT POSITIVE CHANGES DO NOT OCCUR. THE ISRAELI LEADERSHIP, THEY NOTE, CLEARLY IS AWARE OF THE LINK BETWEEN CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS IN THE WEST BANK AND THE STATE OF MIND OF ISRAELI ARABS.

2. THE SCHEDULE OF UPCOMING EVENTS, AS PUT TOGETHER FROM OUR TWO SOURCES, IS AS FOLLOWS: LABOR PARTY MINISTERS AND KNESSET MEMBERS WILL DISCUSS POLICY RE ISRAELI ARABS AT THEIR BEIT BERL IDEOLOGICAL CENTER ON MAY 22, WITH PERES AND EBAN SCHEDULED TO MAKE THE MAJOR PRESENTATIONS. MAY 23 CABINET SESSION WILL BE DEVOTED LARGELY TO CONSIDERATION
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OF PROPOSALS FOR IMPROVEMENT OF RELATIONS WITH ISRAELI ARABS.

RABIN ALSO HAS AGREED TO MEET MAY 24 WITH A NEWLY FORMED NINE-MAN DELEGATION COMPOSED OF HEADS OF LOCAL ARAB COUNCILS. THE DELEGATION, REPRESENTING SOME 50 LOCAL COUNCILS, ITSELF PLANS TO HOLD A MEETING IN ACRE PRIOR TO THE SESSION WITH RABIN TO FORMULATE ITS POSITION.

3. COMMENT: WHETHER THE GOVERNMENT AND THE LABOR PARTY CAN COME UP WITH MEANINGFUL NEW PROPOSALS, AND IMPLEMENT THEM IN A TIMELY FASHION, IS PROBLEMATIC. IN ANY EVENT, THE PROBLEMS OF THE ISRAELI ARAB COMMUNITY MAY NOT BE AMENABLE TO GOVERNMENTAL SOLUTIONS, FOR THEY ARE DEEPLY ROOTED IN THE GENERAL PATTERN OF ARAB-JEWISH RELATIONS IN ISRAEL. INDEED, SOME OBSERVERS BELIEVE THAT ATTITUDES IN THE JEWISH COMMUNITY AT LARGE TOWARD ISRAELI ARABS HAVE ONLY HARDENED SINCE THE MARCH 30 CONFRONTATIONS IN THE GALILEE. THE SHARP INTERNATIONAL GAINS OF THE PLO, AND THE CONTINUING PATTERN OF RIOTS, DEMONSTRATIONS AND DEATHS ON THE WEST BANK HAVE CERTAINLY INTENSIFIED THE ALIENATION OF THE JEWISH AND ARAB COMMUNITIES INSIDE ISRAEL FROM EACH OTHER. ALL IN ALL, OUR PROGNOSIS IS NOT FAVORABLE.
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